

"CLEVE MASTERS: DAY OF RECKONING"

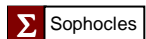
by

Calvin H. Neal, Jr.

"In the Old West only three things mattered; family, honor and revenge."

©2003 Calvin H. Neal, Jr.

1414 Almand Creek Dr.  
Conyers, GA 30094  
Ph.# 678-215-8653



The setting is Hell's Path, Oklahoma Territory, the year, 1883. Hell's Path, an all-Black town and outgrowth of the city of Herberton, on the Oklahoma/Indian Territory--(Creek Nation)-- border, is home to 16 year-old Cleve Masters who is the youngest son of Pete Masters, owner of the Circle M ranch and patriarch of the Masters clan. He and his brothers, Josephus and Tobe, all former Buffalo Soldiers, own 500 adjoining acres in Okfuskee County, where they herd cattle and raise horses. The county has a population that is 85% Black, but it is controlled by a white man, Herbert Guidry, the local banker and the territory's largest single landowner. Guidry's town of Herberton, is the town that Hell's Path sprung from. Cleve is "in love", with Alexandra Guidry, Herbert's daughter. With Guidry getting most of his revenue from blacks and since Pete Masters is the most well respected and wealthiest man, save from Guidry, black or white, in the territory, and with the money that the Masters clan brought to his bank and other businesses , Guidry allows the relationship between Cleve and Alexandra to flourish. But when Alexandra becomes pregnant, Guidry vows he'll have, " no little black bastard for a grandson", and has Cleve arrested for the rape of his 15 year-old daughter. Everyone from the local judges to the U.S. Marshal for the territory implore Guidry to reconsider, asking him to consider the reputation and integrity of the Masters'. Pete Masters and his brothers and their families, had lent assistance, either emotionally, financially or by helping them fight rustlers, to dozens of families in and around both Herberton and Hell's Path. Pete Masters never turned down a neighbor in need, ever. On the eve of Cleve's sentencing, Guidry relents, and agrees to Cleve serving one year, hard labor. But while Guidry is finalizing the agreement with the judge, Alexandra, on the verge of nervous breakdown, commits suicide. When Guidry becomes aware of the circumstances, he orders the judge to sentence Cleve to 10 years hard labor.

INT. -HERBERTON JAIL/COURTHOUSE

JUDGE MC CAWLEY

It is with a heavy heart and  
against my better judgment that I  
hereby sentence you, Cleve  
Masters, to 10 years hard labor,  
in the penitentiary at Ft. Smith  
Arkansas. Son, I hope you know  
that I had to do this. Your's  
has always been one of the most  
law-abidin' and God-fearin'  
family's around here for years  
and nobody feels worse about this  
than I do.

CLEVE

Yes, sir. I know that you can't stand for yourself, sir. I have no quarrel with you for it. You have to live under him.

Him, referred to Herbert Guidry. If he didn't get his way, who or whatever stood in his way paid dearly.

CLEVE

Mr. Guidry, you know I loved your little girl and you know that no one holds more blame for her being gon' from us than you do, sir.

GUIDRY

How dare you speak to me that way, boy. For that, I will have you hung!!

Herbert Guidry was screaming at the top of his lungs. No one, especially a darkie, would speak to him that way. At last, the judge showed some moxie.

JUDGE MC CAWLEY

All right, Herbert this has gone far enough. No one is going to be hung.

The judge had now become enraged. It was bad enough that Cleve was serving any time at all, and now Guidry ranted about hanging. Everyone knew that Cleve never raped Alexandra Guidry. Herbert Guidry had only let these kids carry on because of all the money that the Masters family brought in from all of their business concerns.

JUDGE MC CAWLEY

(to court bailiff)

Please take the prisoner to the jail to await the train to Ft. Smith. I want him under constant watch and he is to see no one but his family. And if Mr. Guidry or any of his men attempt to get into the jail, your orders are to shoot to kill.

**THE SHOT CUTS BETWEEN ALEXANDRA'S FUNERAL, CLEVE'S TRAIN RIDE AND ENTRANCE INTO THE PENITENTIARY.**

As the years pass Cleve grows in body and mind. Whenever he was not digging fence posts, bailing cotton, or constructing new prison buildings, he was reading anything he could get his hands on. He was developing friendships and making enemies. Sanford Thornton, a black bandit and horse thief from Wyoming, had taken an instant dislike to Cleve, for reasons still unknown to Cleve. Cleve had been in prison three weeks when Thornton finally approached him and made his one and only threat.

EXT.-FT.SMITH PRISON YARD

THORNTON

Look boy, I don't like you or  
anybody who looks like you and  
the next time I see you I plan on  
stompin' yo' ass out.

Thornton was a loudmouth who had drawn attention and a crowd. Cleve didn't want to fight him, but he knew that if push came to shove, he'd have to let Thornton, and the rest of the prison know, never to bother him.

CLEVE

I know I don't know ya, so I hope  
ya can just stay ya distance. I  
ain't out for trouble, but if you  
ever touch me, come prepared.

Thornton charged Cleve and landed a right hand to the nose. The blow staggered Cleve and knocked him momentarily off balance. Before Thornton could follow up, Cleve hit him in the stomach, then sent a vicious forearm to the jaw. They exchanged damaging head and body blows before Cleve administered a succession of right hands to Thornton's face, crushing his eye socket. Cleve put an end to the brawl with a thundering body blow and a haymaker to the chin. Bruised and bloodied, Cleve made his way back to his cell and never had another problem with Thornton or any other prisoner.

Back in Hell's Path, Pete Masters and his brothers and their "M" brand ranches are surpassing Herbert Guidry and his Flaming "G" ranch for power and respect in the territory and Guidry would have none of it. Though neither Pete, Josephus or Tobe Masters had never given any indication that they intended to try and usurp Guidry's authority, Herbert Guidry had come to the agonizing realization that the Masters' had to go, while the Masters' only goal was to care for their families and watch their businesses and the community flourish.

INT. -HERBERTON BANK OF HELL'S PATH, HERBERT GUIDRY'S OFFICE

Herbert Guidry is talking to his top henchman, Jeb Pike, deciding with what should be done about the growth and expansions of the "M" brand ranches and businesses. Combined, the brothers had almost 70,000 head of cattle and they had acquired an additional 1000 acres. As far as cattle, they were doing more business than Guidry, due to superior product, but with Guidry being bank owner and president, he had a hand in all businesses in Herberton or Hell's Path. The Masters' also sold hand carved furniture, buckboards and covered wagons and the endeavors were quite lucrative. The only thing that kept Pete Masters and his clan from running the territory was the fact that they were Black. And while Guidry still ran the area, people all around, black and white, showed Pete the respect and deference that Guidry thought **he** deserved. The Masters' were as prominent as he, so Guidry felt he had to do something to take control of the cattle and business interests of the Masters clan. He had to keep control of the region so he could continue to have his men rob, rustle and pillage, keeping him in power. He knew that killing them was his only option. But how to do it and keep his name out of it?

JEB PIKE

Mr. Guidry, the way I see this is that we just kill them niggers and take that land and every head of cattle and horses. Who gives a shit about some niggers with more than they deserve. No darkie should own that much land and have the kind of money them boys got.

Guidry wished it could only be that easy.

GUIDRY

That **nigger** is a personal friend of the territorial governor and is the cousin of Bass Reeves. You do know who Bass Reeves is don't you.

Bass Reeves was a legendary Black U.S deputy who worked for Judge Isaac Parker , out of the Ft. Smith, AK federal court for over 30 years.

JEB PIKE

Yeah, I know Reeves. That nigger put my pa in that Ft. Smith prison seven years ago. Looks like I got even more reason to get after these darkies.

GUIDRY

Now, look Pike. I cannot be connected to this, ever. If you think you can get rid of these people without bringing the federal marshals down on all of us, then do it. If not, I'll bring some guns from **back East**, who will handle it my way.

Guidry knew that the mention of Eastern gunmen would thoroughly agitate Jeb. Jeb was Oklahoma born and bred and thought all men from "back East" were "dudes." He also thought that all the hot-shot gunmen from the East that he had seen were overrated. He'd personally had to kill 3 of these so-called fast guns.

JEB PIKE

Don't worry Mr. Guidry, no one will ever know it was you.

That night, three groups of hooded men simultaneously attacked all the Masters' homesteads. Being cavalry veterans, the Masters brothers valiantly fought their attackers to defend their families, but they were out-gunned and out-manned. The flaming torches, carbines and six-shooters of the swirling mob proved to be too much. And though the raiders had sustained casualties and fatalities, all that remained of the Masters' ranches by sunrise were smoldering ruins and charred remains.

INT. SHILOH MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH, HELL'S PATH

GUIDRY

Listen everyone, I have sent a telegram to Judge Parker at the Ft. Smith Federal Court, asking for U.S. Marshals to look into the senseless slaughter of the Masters families. And I am personally offering a \$5,000.00 reward for capture, dead or alive of the killers. We cannot have citizens of Hell's Path or Herberton wantonly slaughtered. Especially a ramrod straight family like the Masters were.

Jeb Pike could only laugh at Guidry's hypocrisy.

EXT.-OUTSIDE GATES OF FT. SMITH PRISON(10 YEARS LATER)

WARDEN

Well Masters, it's time for you to make your way. If I can ever do anything for you, please don't hesitate to ask. I was going to say you were a credit to your race, but you are a credit to men. If more men would just come and do the time for the offense that occurred, all our lives here would be easier. Good luck son and God bless.

CLEVE

Thanks warden. And if I ever need it, I will use your help. Take care of yourself, sir.

INT.-FORT SMITH AND WESTERN RAILWAYS PASSENGER TRAIN

Waiting for the train to leave the station, Cleve observed and marveled at how different things looked. Fancy buckboards and stagecoaches. Women dressed in the newest fashions from California; men wearing the latest styles from Chicago and New York. As Cleve settled into his seat on the Fort Smith and Western Railways train that was carrying him back home to Oklahoma, all he could think about was his mother's fried chicken, the smell of the country in the morning and how good it was to be free again.

Cleve knew something was wrong, the moment he pulled into the station in Herberton as not one family member was there. Everybody knew when he would be home, his family and townsfolk alike. The people he met seemed to greet him apologetically. What the hell was going on, he thought. He walked the four miles to Hell's Path and made a beeline for the office of Sheriff Caleb Settles. Settles was a grizzled old black man of about sixty, who used to be a wrangler. But when the last sheriff resigned, Caleb was nominated. He was known as "the meanest, honest son-of-a-bitch in Oklahoma." Settles had been in the cavalry with Pete Masters, so he knew Cleve well. So when he saw Cleve come through his door, Caleb regretted he'd ever become sheriff.

INT.-OFFICE OF SHERIFF CALEB SETTLES

CALEB SETTLES

Cleve, the only way I can say it is to come straight out. Some masked raiders killed your family and burned down your home. Judge Parker from Ft. Smith has U.S. Marshals hot on the trail.

CLEVE

Who did this?

(His voice and eyes  
cold as steel)

Just tell me who did this?

CALEB SETTLES

We don't know. They rode in about  
3:00 in the morning two days ago  
and hit all three ranches at the  
same time.

CLEVE

I'll be staying at the ranch.

CALEB SETTLES

But there's nothing there.

CLEVE

I'll be there.  
(walking away)

EXT.-ROAD LEADING FROM HELL'S PATH TO CIRCLE "M" RANCH

Cleve didn't realize that he was riding the horse until he rode up to the still smoldering remains of his family home. He didn't remember leaving the sheriff's office, going to the livery stable and buying horse and saddle. And for the life of him, he had no idea how he came to be wearing a double-holstered gunbelt, dressed with twin Colt 45 single action revolvers or where the Winchester rifle on his saddle came from. Tears rolled down Cleve's emotionless face. Then and there he vowed, as God was his witness, he would find and kill everyone involved in this slaughter.

EXT.-FLAMING "G" RANCH, BARN.

Jeb Pike and his cohorts, including his cousin Buck Morgan, Buck's brother Phil and Jeb's younger brother, Earl, were aware of Cleve's return and never considered that Cleve might retaliate or even be a threat. That would turn out to be the biggest mistake of their lives. They remembered the 16 year-old "colored boy" who had been sent to prison 10 years ago. But, 10 years of hard labor had helped Cleve to develop his 6'3", 225 pound frame into a hard, sinewy work of art.

JEB PIKE

Well, if that little nigger  
starts any problems, I will take  
care of him ma self.



BUCK MORGAN

Hell, Jeb. You couldn't whip the darkie back then, what makes ya think he won't whip your sorry ass again?

Everybody laughed, except Jeb.

EARL PIKE

That ol' nigger did kinda dust you off, big brother.

(howling with laughter)

JEB PIKE

All you sumbitches can kiss my ass. You let that nigger try that shit now. I'll show him and you all too!

(fuming with rage and embarrassment)

Ten years earlier Jeb Pike had been sweet on Alexandra Guidry. She thought him an ugly, ignorant cowhand, and had told him as much. Herbert Guidry, as much as he liked Pike and admired his loyalty and toughness, didn't think someone like Pike was good enough for his daughter. And though he had no intention of letting his daughter marry Cleve, he didn't want to risk losing all the money he made from the Masters clan and their holdings. One afternoon, only months before Cleve was sent to prison, Jeb, Buck, Earl and Phil crossed paths with Cleve and Alexandra, who were joined by Alexandra's brother Hiram and Cleve's brothers, Ray and Clint.

EXT.-STREET, HERBERTON, OKLAHOMA

The Pike/Morgan's bunch, drunk and disorderly as usual, spied Cleve and Alexandra and company, and immediately set in, goading Jeb about "his woman."

EARL PIKE

Hey Jeb, there goes your woman, with that nigger. I bet he stuck some to her last night.

(barely containing his laughter)

BUCK MORGAN

Yeah son, how long you gonna let  
that that boy keep humpin' yer  
woman?

(displaying disdain  
not only to Cleve and  
Alexandra, but  
disrespect to Jeb)

Jeb knew that all he could ever do was pine for Alexandra  
Guidry. When Jeb had gone to Mr. Guidry, and told him of his  
intention to make Alexandra, "his wife" :

GUIDRY

(laughing)

You aren't serious, are you? You  
are an excellent cowhand and  
gunman, but that's all you are.  
Your lack of education and couth  
would prevent you from traveling  
in the same society as my daughter.  
How could you ever care for her  
in the fashion to which she is  
accustomed? Pike, find yourself  
as nice farm girl and be happy.

The words had stung Jeb and he'd never forgotten them.

JEB PIKE

Buck, cover me.

BUCK MORGAN

(feeling his revolver)

I got ya cousin.

Jeb walked over to Cleve and Alexandra and drunkenly starts  
to talk to Alexandra. Not only does he ignore Cleve and the  
others, he starts in with the wrong words.

JEB PIKE

Miss Alexandra, you ain't never  
gonna be happy wit this nigger.  
You deserve more than a bunch of  
little nappy-headed pickaninnies  
runnin' around. Ya need ya self a  
good old, hard-working white man.

CLINT MASTERS

What, like you hillbilly?  
(The Masters contingent  
all laugh)

BUCK MORGAN  
 You niggers think that's funny,  
 huh?  
 (Reaching for his gun)

Before he can release the gun from is holster, Clint and Ray Masters have already drawn and have the drop on Jeb and Buck.

RAY MASTERS  
 We ain't even gonna have none of  
 that.  
 (aiming his gun and  
 words at Buck)

CLEVE  
 Lets go Alexandra.

CLEVE  
 (directed to Jeb)  
 I'll deal with you another time.

Jeb and Buck are livid.

BUCK MORGAN  
 Just watch where ya go boy. I'm  
 gonna catch ya, then I'll teach  
 ya black ass how to respect a  
 white man.  
 (he's looking directly  
 at Ray)

But that wasn't good enough for Jeb.

JEB PIKE  
 Deal with me now, Masters. Or are  
 ya just another dumb, chicken-  
 hearted nigger?

Cleve catches Jeb in mid-step and commences to beat the living daylights out of Jeb. Earl Pike never made a move to assist his brother. Buck attempts to help assist him, but Ray has the drop on him again.

BUCK MORGAN  
 JEB!!!!  
 (he screams, going for  
 his gun)

Ray fires, striking Buck in the arm before he can get his gun out.

RAY MASTERS

Don't be stupid.

By this point, a crowd had gathered and as much as the Masters were respected by the community, the Pike/Morgan's were despised.

VOICES FROM THE CROWD

MAN # 1: That's what ya  
get, Morgan. Leave them folk alone.

VOICES FROM THE CROWD

WOMAN # 1: Why don't you  
people stay outside of town with  
your animals.

EXT.-"M" BRAND RANCH

After surveying what was left of the "M" ranches, Cleve began to salvage what he could out of the devastation. He went to the bank and took control of his families assets and began rebuilding the circle "M", alone. But once his **friends**, heard of the massacre, they came to his aid. The first people Cleve had met on his first day in Ft. Smith were Rufus Buck and Lucky Davis. Rufus was the leader of a gang carrying his name, and Lucky was his top man. They were finishing up a three-year stretch for stage-coach robbery. Rufus had always wanted to learn to read and Cleve taught him, in a way unlike anyone else had tried; by not treating him like he was stupid. He just taught him. And Rufus vowed to never forget that.

RUFUS BUCK

Masters, I ain't good at thankin'  
folk, but ya treated me like a  
man, even when you knew I couldn't  
read and I don't mind sayin' that  
I'm beholdin' to ya.

CLEVE

No need ta thank me. Ain't  
nothing ta helpin' a fella that  
wants to learn sumpin'.

RUFUS BUCK

(with look of  
admiration and respect)  
If ya ever needin' help, the  
Rufus Buck Gang'll be there.

One evening, a few weeks after his return, Cleve heard a commotion coming from the barn he was re-building. He grabbed his Winchester and went to investigate.

As he approached the barn, rifle at the ready, he saw the illumination of what he knew was a kerosene lamp. Creeping toward the door, Cleve peered inside and found Rufus Buck, Lucky Davis and an Indian Cleve knew was Louis Davis, who was not related to Lucky, setting up camp.

CLEVE

You fellas are always welcome,  
inside.

RUFUS BUCK

(turning around  
quickly, gun drawn,  
before recognizing Cleve)  
Masters, you almost got ya damn  
self plugged. Ya cain't be  
creeping up on folk that way.  
(turning to Lucky and Louis)  
You know Lucky. The dusty injun  
fella is Louis Davis.

Rufus didn't have to introduce him. Cleve knew who he was the minute he saw him. A full blooded Creek, Louis was the third member of the gang that Rufus and Lucky had regaled Cleve with stories of. Rufus, Cleve and Lucky exchange embraces, and Cleve shakes hands with Louis. As they walked through the rubble, Rufus spoke.

RUFUS BUCK

We heard what happened when we  
was near Abilene. Who was it?

CLEVE

I ain't sure about that yet. I  
got a couple ideas.

RUFUS BUCK

Well, if ya can put up with the  
likes of us, we'll be here when  
ya find out.

CLEVE

I got a pot of stew cooking  
inside, if anybody's interested.

The men exchange glances, smiles and nods of respect,  
admiration and loyalty.

EXT.-ROAD TO HELL'S PATH THE FOLLOWING DAY AS CLEVE AND  
LOUIS RIDE

LOUIS

Why are you not an outlaw?

The question caught Cleve off guard. Louis saw Cleve's expression and explained.

LOUIS

The only person outside the gang  
that Rufus and Lucky ever trusted  
like they trust you was Dick  
Glass.

(another famous Black outlaw)

LOUIS

Rufus talked about how he wished  
you'd join up with us. He told us  
how you taught him to read, and  
how he never saw you back down  
from no man, black, white,  
prisoner or guard.

CLEVE

Louis, I'm just a fella who was  
raised right by his ma and pa.  
I'm just a cowboy from Hell's  
Path. Hell, only man I've ever  
afraid of was my old man and he's  
gon' now.....

His voices trails off and he looks out over the horizon.

CLEVE

Pa was a Buffalo Soldier. All his  
friends, my uncles, Pa's cousin,  
Bass Reeves, all Buffalo Soldiers  
or lawmen. We had the ranches,  
nice things. But, I always had to  
work extra hard. 'Specially since  
I was the youngest. Pa didn't  
want Ma making a "woman" out of  
me, so he worked Hell outta me.  
But, I grew up around the hands.  
Most of 'em were outlaws of some  
order who knew my Pa or uncles  
and needed work.

LOUIS

Well, if my 'brothers' say you  
are a man of respect and honor,  
you are my friend also.

EXT.-CITY OF HELL'S PATH

Cleve heads to Herbert Guidry's bank and tells Louis he'll  
meet him in the saloon, the Black Nugget. After conducting  
his business with Guidry, Cleve would join Louis.

Whiskey would really cut the dust from the ride, he said to himself. Cleve entered the bank and went directly to Guidry's office. He knocked on the door and was asked in. Inside Guidry's office were his top men, Jeb Pike, Buck Morgan, Ike Mooney, Rafe Carson, Tully Grant and Wash Kelly. All the cowboys knew Cleve, but none had seen Cleve since he returned and were all surprised at how he had matured. But, Jeb Pike and Buck Morgan were supposed to be the meanest of the local outlaws. Even most of the Black outlaws avoided the Pike/Morgan bunch.

INT.-HERBERT GUIDRY'S OFFICE

JEB PIKE

Say boy, what the hell they  
feedin' you convicts in that  
prison. Youse a pretty big nigger  
now, huh boy?

Cleve's mind immediately went back to his altercation with Jeb 10 years ago. Jeb too, had grown into man and a pretty tough cowboy. But he never knew how to pick his battles, and he had to kill five or six men with his six-shooters that he couldn't beat with fists. It seemed that when he and the boys got drunk, gunplay was close behind. Cleve also knew that he had whipped Jeb before and could easily do it now. But this was not the time or place.

CLEVE

It's Cleve, Cleve Masters. You  
can take that 'nigger' foolishness  
somewhere else.

(looking and speaking  
directly to Jeb)

BUCK MORGAN

Who the hell you think you  
talkin' to boy? Better apologize  
to that white man before I kill  
your sorry Black ass!!!!

The moment Cleve saw Buck go for his gun, and in the blink of an eye, he had his own twin Colts pointed at Buck and Jeb.

CLEVE

Mr. Guidry, I just came here to  
leave this here money in your  
bank. Now, I think I'll just come  
back another time.

All Guidry's men were so stunned by the events, that they hadn't even attempted to pull their guns. Guidry was also shocked by Cleve's nerve and gun speed.

This is not what he needed or wanted. And he was well aware of the history between Cleve and Jeb. All he needed was for Cleve to find out that he was behind the "M" Ranch massacres.

.

GUIDRY

Gentlemen, please. Let's try to settle this like civilized people, shall we? Cleve, there's no need for the revolvers, is there boys?

Buck and Jeb were fuming. But they hadn't gone for their guns. And Cleve had not taken his eyes or guns off of them

.

BUCK MORGAN

Boss, I ain't lettin' no nigger pull no gun on me and not kill him.

(Cleve cocked the pistols)  
You tellin' me I can't kill this nigger?

CLEVE

No, I'm telling you. Nobody gotta die here. Unless you, or any one of your men make a move to the hip.

GUIDRY

Please, please, we needn't go that far.

Guidry was now afraid that someone would get killed and he did not want that.

GUIDRY

(very sternly)  
Buck, Jeb. Let it go.

JEB PIKE(RELUCTANTLY)

You got lucky, this time Masters. We'll see how you handle yourself on the street. We'll be sure to see you around.

BUCK MORGAN

You better believe it, nigger!

CLEVE

I'm sure you know the way to the Circle "M".



TULLY GRANT

You bet yer ass we do.

When Buck Morgan and Guidry both looked at Tully after his statement, Cleve knew, at that moment who was responsible for the deaths of his family. Guidry tried to distract Cleve.

GUIDRY

Cleve, I think it would be better for you to come back. Come around tomorrow and we can handle that business. And I'll see that the boys mind their manners. Don't worry.

CLEVE

( asking with extreme confidence)  
About what?

Cleve backed out of Guidry's office, guns still trained on Jeb and Buck and went to the Black Nugget to meet Louis. The scene there was raucous. Piano blaring, hooting and hollering cowboys, and of course, women.. In one corner, the local cardsharp was fleecing a group of travelers from the east. Cleve saw Louis at the bar and joined him.

INT.-BLACK NUGGET SALOON

CLEVE

Barkeep, whiskey.

Louis looked at Cleve and could sense a problem.

LOUIS

What happened, friend.

CLEVE

I just had to draw down on Guidry's men. Louis, I think they killed my family. I could almost see it.

LOUIS

Do we kill them now?

Cleve smiled for the first time in a long time as he glanced toward Louis.

CLEVE

Not yet, cousin. But, stay close. I just saw two of Guidry's men come into the saloon.

When Cleve saw Tully Grant and Wash Kelly enter the Black Nugget, he knew somebody was gonna die. Tully Grant was a veteran rustler, robber and cowpoke. He was older and more experienced than most of Guidry's men, but his lack of social skills and obnoxiousness relegated him to being one of Guidry's best cowhands.. Like most of the Pike/Morgan bunch, he was a drunk and a meaner one than most. Wash Kelly was a cattle rustler and bandit from Texas, who was working with Guidry while "on the scout" from Texas Rangers. He and Tully were old friends from Abilene.

CLEVE

(whispering to Louis  
and motioning toward Tully)  
Them two cowboys right there are  
with Guidry. They were just in  
front of my gun.

LOUIS

I am ready.

Louis moved down the bar, away from Cleve. Tully and Wash didn't have to know he was with Cleve. But, Louis would kill the first man that moved.

WASH KELLY

Hey Tully, there's goes that  
nigger who just pulled his gun on  
us. Do we kill him here or outside?

TULLY GRANT

I ain't sure. Hey boy, you want  
to die in here or out in the sun.

Cleve turned around and held back his coat, exposing his revolvers.

CLEVE

I'm just tryin' ta have a drink.  
I have no quarrel with you. My  
business is with Jeb Pike and  
Buck Morgan.

TULLY GRANT

And that's who we ride with, so  
your business is with us now.

Tully went for his gun and never knew what hit him. Cleve hit him with blasts from both Colts, immediately ending his life.

WASH KELLY

(screaming)  
Tully!! You're all mine nigger.

Wash went for his gun and suddenly froze. Five seconds seemed like an eternity. Wash dropped to his knees and collapsed on his face. Louis bent down and pulled his knife from Wash's back.

The Black Nugget was abuzz. There were other Guidry men in the saloon, but none who would challenge Cleve or Louis. Cleve motioned toward the door to Louis. Louis went out the door first, brandishing his revolver, back to back with Cleve, who was holding the rest of Guidry's men, as a safety precaution, at bay. Cleve went right to Sheriff Caleb Settles office to report the incident. Upon hearing Cleve's version of the events, Sheriff Settles was sure that his story was probably, in fact the truth. He knew Grant and Kelly and the whole Flaming "G" bunch and he knew the Pike/Morgan's penchant for causing trouble. And he was also aware of the history between Cleve, Guidry and Pike. And he knew that this incident was just the beginning.

INT.-SHERIFF'S OFFICE

CALEB SETTLES

Did ya hafta kill 'em both? I mean, they were a couple of worthless scoundrels, but they was Guidry's boys. And they white, son. Ever'body knows about you and them folks. I got me a sack of load work now. Just go back to ya home and I'll let you know what Guidry expects.

CLEVE

Caleb, I ain't come ta town for no troubles. I went to see Ol' Man Guidry at the bank and almost had to blast my way out of the bank. Jeb and Buck was there and well, words were exchanged and....the next thing I know, I'm backing out of the bank, flamers in hand. Jeb was tryin' ta rile me and I let him get to me.

CALEB SETTLES

Well, you really gonna hafta be careful now, you and your friend...?

CLEVE

Caleb, this is Louis Davis. Louis, this is Hell's Path law, Caleb Settles. He was with my Pa, in the Cavalry.

Louis nodded and looked at Caleb as just another lawman. Louis never trusted lawmen, and didn't hide his displeasure. Cleve tried to put him at ease.

CLEVE

Don't worry, Caleb may be the last of the honest lawmen. I've know'd him all my life and he ain't never give nobody up to a mob, less'n they had it coming their way.

CALEB SETTLES

I'm gonna be least of ya worries now. Them boys Guidry got workin' and ridin' for him is a bunch of mean sumbitches. And them Pike/Morgan boys is down right crazy. You boys be careful now. Anythin' ya need, Cleve?

CLEVE

If ya could just make sure I don't get railroaded again, I'd be grateful.

CALEB SETTLES

(sheepishly)

It won't happen this time. I'll ride out in a couple days and check on you boys.

Cleve and Louis rode out of town, past Jeb Pike, Buck Morgan and their gang, who were in front of the Black Nugget and aware of the killings of their men. The impact of the words that were next spoken spelled the start of a bloody month in Herberton and Hell's Path.

EXT.-STREET IN FRONT OF GUIDRY'S BANK

BUCK MORGAN

Jeb, I think we need to start another fire.

JEB PIKE

I think ya might be right, cousin.

This was Cleve's confirmation of his suspicions that Guidry and his men were involved in the death of his family. Cleve stopped his horse and spoke directly to Buck and the boys.

CLEVE

I'm givin' fair warnin'. Anybody ridin' with Buck Morgan and Jeb Pike is gonna get hisself killed. 'Cause that's what I'm gonna do to Jeb and Buck. Jeb, Buck I'm letting ya know, I intend ta kill ya both. I know ya killed my folks and ya got ta pay. Now ain't the time, unless ya plan ta make a move.

(throwing back his coat to expose his gun. Louis was cradling his Carbine. Nobody moved.)

Fair warnin'.

Cleve and Louis rode away and never looked back. Cleve knew no one would shoot. When Cleve and Louis got back to the Circle "M", a small crowd was watching some kind of ruckus in front of the barn. The only person of the five gathered that he recognized, was Lucky. As they stopped their horses and dismounted, they saw that two fellas were on the ground, fighting and they could see that Rufus was one of the combatants. But a look into the crowd told him who it was that Rufus was fighting. Of the five assembled, Cleve recognized Arizona Green, an outlaw that Cleve had known since childhood. Next to him was Cash Jennings. Cash had killed 17 men. Jennings came from "back east", Philadelphia.

The son of a white father that was a railroad engineer and a Black-French mother from New Orleans, Cash, his given name, was a very handsome man. And back in Philadelphia, that was a plus. Embracing his Black heritage, Cash was educated as an accountant. Having a thriving business, he decided to go west and start business in one of the new territories. On his first night in Oklahoma, he was set up upon by cowboys because of his good looks. Smart enough to know that the west was wide open, he'd learned to handle a sidearm before leaving Philadelphia.

INT.-OKLAHOMA CITY SALOON

FIRST COWBOY

Goddamn, Slim. That's a damn pretty man. Never seen a fella that pretty.

Cash tried to ignore him, but other cowboys, drunken, chimed in.

SECOND COWBOY

Whatta ya say we see if that's really a woman.

They never had a chance. Both of the cowboys that had spoken, were gunned down. Cash didn't hesitate. He knew that if they got close enough, they would have him. Immediately, another cowboy came at Cash, gun drawn. Before Cash could react, the gunman hit him in the arm and kept coming. As Cash collapsed against the bar, he heard a shot come from his left and his assailant yelled out in pain and died on the floor in front of him. His savior was Arizona Green.

ARIZONA GREEN

Handle ya self pretty good for  
city fella. Couldn't let ya get  
killed ya first day out west.

(helping Cash out of  
the saloon)

I know a doc. We better go see him.

That began his friendship with Arizona and the beginning of Cash's life as an outlaw. Every town he and Arizona traveled to, brought a new notch on Cash's pearl handled, custom made .44's. Arizona and Cash made their living playing cards or robbing the games when they lost.

EXT.-CLEVE MASTERS RANCH

Also in the crowd were Dick Parker and Zeke Taylor. The two cattle rustler/bandits, along with Cash and Arizona were members of one of the most feared Black cowboy gangs, The Black Canyon Boys . They were led by an insane cowboy from right across the border in the Creek Nation. Cleve had known this maniac all his life. Born to a Black father, Garfield Mitchell and a Creek woman, Minnie Crow, the gangs leader was Cleve's first cousin, the infamous and murderous, Three-Gun Mitchell. Garfield Mitchell and Cleve's mom, Ella, were siblings. As far back as Cleve could remember, all Three-Gun, (born Horace), wanted to do was fight and shoot his guns. And if someone was in front of his gun when he shot, all the better. Rufus and Three-Gun were old friends, unbeknownst to Cleve.

CLEVE

Say, Horace, you want ta get yo  
sorry ass off the ground.

(yelling)

RUFUS BUCK

Horace? That's some fancy name ya  
got there. So Masters, this no-  
account galoot is ya kin huh?

Well, I'm sorry for ya.

(laughing)

Me and ya cousin been friends for  
a spell now. Never seen a man  
that could shoot like him. And my  
whole gang is crack shots.

Cleve and his cousin, who were always trying to best each other, had been most competitive at marksmanship. And as painful as it was for him, Three-Gun would grudgingly admit that the only man who could out shoot him was Cleve. And he knew that Three-Gun hated his given name. He'd even shot a few men for using it. He got the name Three-Gun, due to the two, engraved gold Colt Peacemakers he had hip and chest-holstered, along with the nickel-plated pistol he wore in a holster tucked in the small of his back.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL  
 (rising from the  
 ground, gun drawn)  
 Cousin, you know I hate that name.

Before he could finish his sentence, he really looked at Cleve.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL  
 Cousin! Damn, you done grewed.

CLEVE  
 That prison wasn't no picnic and  
 ten years ain't a nap.

They embraced, both smiling from ear to ear. Cleve felt a sudden calm come over him. He finally had what he had been missing, family.

INT.-HERBERT GUIDRY'S OFFICE

GUIDRY  
 All right boys, quiet down. No  
 need for panic. We just have to  
 strategize and take control of  
 this situation.

BUCK MORGAN  
 Mr. Guidry, I know you're the  
 boss, but I ain't of a mind to  
 take to that nigger talking about  
 killing Jeb and me. Just let me  
 and the boys go out there and  
 take care of him and that injun.

JEB PIKE  
 Yeah, boss. And we kinda let slip  
 that we was responsible for the  
 fires. We was just trying to let  
 him know we was serious. But we  
 can take care of him and his  
 friend just like we did them  
 other niggers. Let's do it tonight.

Guidry wanted to do it, but he also wanted to avoid further bloodshed at all costs. Maybe with Cleve's knowledge of what had happened, maybe he could convince Cleve to sell him the land and leave the territory. But he knew, that Cleve was just like his father, intelligent, strong and unafraid. He hoped that killing Cleve and his Indian companion wouldn't be his only option, again.

BUCK MORGAN

Hell, so what if we kill another nigger and a injun.

GUIDRY

Let me try and talk some sense to him. He'll more than likely be back tomorrow to finish his business. If I can't persuade him to sell, I'll have no option but to let you boys handle the situation.

Thinking that only Cleve and Louis were to be dealt with, would prove a deadly mistake. The scene at the Circle "M" that night was wild. This was the first time that Cleve had actually enjoyed himself since he'd returned home. For Cleve and Three-Gun, it was a bittersweet reunion. Though Cleve was the oldest in age, Three-Gun always looked at Cleve as his little brother. Minnie Crow had died when the boys were four and Three-Gun had been raised by his father Garfield, who was a cattle rustler, gambler and heavy drinker. Although Pete Masters disliked Garfield's drinking and gambling, it was the cattle rustling that he hated most; that was against the law and in his eyes, his brother-in-law was just a common criminal. But this was also his wife's only brother and he couldn't keep them apart. Since little Horace had no mother, Cleve's mom, Ella, was it. And Pete liked the boy as much as he liked the father. "Ya sure know what buffalo that chip came from", Pete would say when talking about the father and son. Cleve and Horace were like brothers, always competing to be the best rider, or shot or just being the most physical and athletic. At 13, while living with his father in the Creek Nation, Young Horace fell in with a bunch of older delinquents and got in to trouble with the law. First, they were caught by the Lighthorsemen, trying to make alcohol to sell and were given 3 months sentences. Thus began the life of contempt for the law and the legend of Three-Gun Mitchell. After hours of hearty eating and drinking, Cleve's experiences that day became the topic of conversation.



INT.-CLEVE MASTERS' HOME, "M" BRAND RANCH

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

I came as soon as I heard. Even though your ma didn't birth me, she cared for me like she had. Cleve, you always been my little brother and I figure we got ta make this thing right.

(a single tear falls  
from his left eye)

I told the boys that this was my fight, but, well, ya see they came too.

ARIZONA GREEN

Cleve, we always been ok. Ya folks treated me like family. Three-Gun is my brother, so I'm here too.

RUFUS BUCK

Looks like you got ya self a nice little bunch here, Masters.

Cleve surveyed the scene and was heartened. Though they numbered only nine, this group was made up of some of the territory's most deadly and wanted criminals. Cleve recounted the events of the day. When he told how Buck Morgan had talked of "starting another fire", the room became deathly quiet only to be broken by Three-Gun.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

Buck Morgan is mine. I don't want no argument, Cleve. I know she was your ma, but I loved her just the same.

CLEVE

(smiling)

You'll get no argument out of me. And you can be sure, cousin, she was your ma too. Now, I figure since Guidry is behind this, he must want the property. But, any of ya that know me, know damn well I ain't selling. This has been my family's land for over 20 years and I don't intend ta leave it. Guidry knows that too. But, he has to make a try to get at me in a legal way. After that fails, then he'll have to make a move. Now, all they know is that Louis is with me, so if everybody else just kinda lays low, we might be able to give these fellas a surprise, when they come for me.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

So cousin, I'm figurin' you got a  
idea or two? Long as I get Buck  
Morgan, whatever you says goes.  
You fellas all right with that?

The room buzzed with agreement. Cleve detailed how the next day , he and Louis would again go to Guidry's bank, this time only on the pretext of depositing money into the bank and allow Guidry to show his hand. Cleve figured Guidry would offer to buy the property of all three "M" brand ranches. When Cleve refused his offer, Cleve and rest knew that Guidry would be forced to act.

RUFUS BUCK

Look Masters, I'm with ya ta the  
end, but when ya go inta town  
tomorrow, me and Lucky gonna  
already be there, real  
inconspicuous like.

CLEVE(TO RUFUS,WITH A SMILE)

That's a pretty fancy word.

RUFUS BUCK(SMILING BACK)

Had a good teacher.

CLEVE

Ain't no way I can thank you  
fellas for what ya doin' here. I  
know ya all know, this is gonna  
be real bloody. So, I'll have the  
same respect for any man who  
chooses to not get involved.

No one said a word or moved a muscle.

RUFUS BUCK

From talking to these fellas that  
already knew ya, I see I was  
right about ya. You ain't a  
outlaw like us, but ya friend is  
ya friend and long as he is, ya  
gonna back his play. We already  
studied on it Cleve. We're with ya.

Cleve looked over at Rufus. That was the first time Rufus had called Cleve by his first name, it was always "Masters". The two men nodded at each other in acknowledgement.

RUFUS BUCK  
 So, us being your friends,  
     (nodding towards  
     Three-Gun)  
 and family we gonna back yo' play.

Cleve went around the room and embraced each man and  
 whispered a soft, "Thank you, friend", into their ears.

EXT.-CITY OF HELL'S PATH

When Cleve and Louis rode into town, Rufus and Lucky were  
 outside the Black Nugget, having a cigarette. They'd had a  
 couple of shots of whiskey and then had gone outside to  
 silently await the arrival of their friends. Once again,  
 Cleve, this time accompanied by Louis, entered Guidry's bank  
 and went directly to his office. When they entered only  
 Guidry and Buck Morgan were there. Guidry immediately made  
 his move.

INT.-HELL'S PATH BANK, HERBERT GUIDRY'S OFFICE

GUIDRY  
 I'm glad to see you Cleve. I was  
 going to ride out to your place  
 later. I'm sorry you haven't been  
 exactly welcomed back to town,  
 but I can't always control the  
 boys.

CLEVE  
     (looking at Buck)  
 The way you couldn't stop them  
 from massacring my folks. Old  
 Buck here kinda let that slip  
 during our talk yesterday.

GUIDRY  
 Which brings me to the point.  
 Cleve we don't need anymore  
 bloodshed. Since, by relation,  
 you can make a legal claim on all  
 three ranches, figure I give you,  
 say, \$10, 000.00 for the land.  
 Ten thousand could stake you to a  
 nice start somewhere else. I  
 think we could all live with  
 that, don't you think.

BUCK MORGAN  
 Hell, that sounds like more than  
 enough for a nigger. Sure could  
 save hisself a whole lot of  
 trouble. Just take the money and  
 run nigger, run.

CLEVE

I'm sure that's a generous offer sir, but I ain't got no plans to be leavin'. This is my home and I figure I'll just rebuild the ranch and do what my pa and uncles would have wanted. It seems you have a problem with that, so like I said yesterday, Buck and Jeb are gonna die and anyone with them will go the same way. And when I'm done with them, I'm coming for you.

Buck was about to explode. Cleve was talking of killing him and Jeb and he was talking to Guidry about it like Buck wasn't even in the room.

BUCK MORGAN

I'm standing right here, nigger.  
(venomously)  
Don't talk to Mr. Guidry like I ain't here.

Cleve smiled a wicked smile.

CLEVE

Why shouldn't I? Soon, you won't be.

Guidry had to physically restrain Buck. Though in his early fifties, Herbert Guidry was a mountain of a man. At 6'5" and almost 300 pounds, he was solid and in excellent condition, which made containing the younger, feisty Morgan no problem.

GUIDRY

Well, I'm sorry to hear you say that. Like I said, I can't always stop the boys.  
(glancing toward an enraged Buck)  
You and your Indian friend should be careful. This can be a very dangerous town.

BUCK MORGAN

Yo black ass is mine, boy!

CLEVE

Anybody who wants me, knows where I am.

Buck Morgan followed Cleve and Louis as they left the bank, confronting him once they were outside. He was joined outside by his brother Phil and Jeb and Earl Pike.

EXT.-HELL'S PATH BANK

BUCK MORGAN

Guess me and the boys'll be  
seeing you real soon nigger.

CLEVE

Whenever you ready to die, you  
know where to find me. And if any  
one of you ever call me nigger  
again, I'll burn you where you  
stand.

Cleve never took his eyes of Buck as they rode away from the bank and out of town. Rufus and Lucky, who had been across the street, at the ready, went back to the Black Nugget for a couple more drinks then they too, returned to Cleve's. At the ranch, the men ate a hearty meal and finalized their plans.

INT.-CLEVE MASTERS' HOME

CLEVE

I figure that Guidry will send  
his men out here tonight so I  
think we ought to be preparin'.  
I'm figurin' Jeb and Buck will  
have about 20 men with him.  
Rufus, I need you Lucky, Cash and  
Arizona to ride out and wait near  
that rock formation at Whistler's  
Pass. Once Pike and Morgan pass  
by, give them 15 minutes and come  
up behind them.

RUFUS BUCK

Just let us load up on ammunition  
and we can go get set up.

CLEVE

Once the shootin' starts, **we** aim  
to be around when the dust  
settles. Then I take Guidry to  
the sheriff. Killing him would be  
to easy for him. He'd suffer a  
whole lot worse on a chain gang.  
Then, he wouldn't be the highest  
hog, just another convict. Now,  
let's finish our grub so we can  
get ready.

Rufus and the men with him set up at Whistler's Pike near midnight and waited patiently for the Pike/Morgan boys to show up. Back at the ranch, Cleve and Louis would stay in the house, while Three-Gun, Zeke and Dick set up outside.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL  
 Alright cousin, this the dance.  
 You take care of Jeb Pike and I  
 swear even if I get killed, I'm  
 taking Buck Morgan with me.

Cleve and his cousin looked at each other, knowing this may be the last time they ever saw each other. The looks they exchanged spoke volumes.

CLEVE  
 No need to worry. This is what we  
 have to do. I bet I'll be seein'  
 ya soon.

Daylight was just beginning to creep over the horizon, when Arizona alerted the others to the sound of horses. The men took their positions within the rocks and counted 19 men, including Jeb Pike and Buck Morgan. The men checked their weapons and bullets feeling a supreme confidence, having the element of surprise.

EXT.-WHISTLER'S PASS

ARIZONA GREEN  
 We gon' catch them crackas  
 sleeping and set they ass on fire.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL  
 Yes sir. They sho' ain't gonna  
 expect what come up behind 'em.  
 We gon' catch 'em in a tornado,  
 comin' out of nowhere. Let's get  
 this thing done.

Jeb, Buck and company rode onto the Circle "M" slowly, deliberately. As they approached the house, Buck yelled out.

EXT.-CLEVE MASTERS' HOME

EARL PIKE  
 Hey nigger, ya got visitors. Get  
 ya black ass out here. NOW!

Cleve came out of the house, cocking his Winchester and shooting Earl in the chest, knocking him from his horse, mortally wounded. He was followed by Louis, racking a shell into his 12 gauge pump shotgun.

LOUIS

Ok, boys, be real still, 'less ya  
wanta join your friend here.  
(motioning with the shotgun)

CLEVE

I told ya, next one said nigger,  
gets burned. Pike, your move.

Earl lay on the ground, bleeding, clutching his chest and  
calling out to his brother.

EARL PIKE

Jeb, Jeb, help me.  
(gasping)  
That nigger shot me.

Cleve shot him again, killing him. Buck Morgan smiled. Earl  
was his cousin, but Buck thought him a poor excuse for a man.  
Jeb jumped down from his horse and ran to Earl, kneeling  
over his brother, crying.

JEB PIKE

Buck, that bastard killed Earl.  
(sobbing)

Buck gave a pre-arranged signal and his men started to fall  
back, as if to get into position for gunplay. Jeb put Earl's  
lifeless body on his horse and then mounted his own horse  
and joined his friends. Cleve knew things were about to  
explode. One of the Pike/Morgan bunch fired a shot that hit  
Louis in the leg. That's when all hell broke loose. Phil  
Morgan, Buck's brother started the melee. He fired wildly  
toward the house, administering Louis's leg wound.

PHIL MORGAN

I'mma kill you sumbitches!  
(yelling)

Zeke Taylor raised from the back of a covered buckboard and  
hit Phil with a blast from his shotgun, shredding his left  
arm with lead pellets. As he screamed out, Cleve and Louis  
retreated into the house for cover, firing as they went. A  
just arriving Three-Gun, began exchanging fire with the  
Pike/Morgan's, who were using the barn for cover. Dick  
Parker, while reloading his rifle, stuck his head around the  
corner of the water trough that he was was using as cover,  
and caught a bullet that shattered his face and killed him  
instantly.

Zeke let loose two blasts from his shotgun, followed by a volley from his Colt 45 Lone Star, taking down Dick's killer, who was perched in the barn's *upper door*. Phil Morgan, with his good right arm, had snuck around and drawn a bead on an unsuspecting Cleve through a window. At the split second before he could fire, Cash Jennings killed him with a shot to the neck from his Winchester carbine. Cash and the "tornado", had swirled in catching Buck and Jeb and their men in a crossfire.

BUCK MORGAN

Where the hell did all these  
niggers come from?  
(yelling to Jeb)

JEB PIKE

I don't know, but they coming  
from everywhere.

Buck and Jeb had lost two men, leaving 17. They were surrounded by only 9 men, but they had no idea how many they were up against. Buck knew he had to kill everyone, but he now needed a plan. He gathered the men near the front of the barn and laid out his plan.

BUCK MORGAN

We don't know how many we got out  
there so we need to find out. We  
count 17 now, so we got to find  
out how many they got.

Buck sent out two men, Ike Mooney and Rafe Carson, to scout the area and see how many men they were fighting and where they were.

BUCK MORGAN

I need to know where they shootin'  
from and how many is out there.  
And if ya can get a bead on any  
of 'em, take 'em.

Buck had the men set up in or near all windows doors and other openings to the barn. He was mad and wanted all these niggers dead. But he could see that would not be easy. He had only anticipated Cleve and Louis, quick work, but now, he and his men were caught in a "shitstorm". He needed Jeb to stop crying like a woman and step up.

BUCK MORGAN

Look cousin, I know ya feelin'  
bad about Earl and I'm sorry for  
ya, but we ain't got time for no  
grievin' right now. Don't ya  
wanta pay back that nigger that  
killed your brother?



JEB PIKE  
 (wiping his face and  
 trying to compose himself)  
 He's mine Buck. I'mma send that  
 nigger to hell, just like we did  
 the rest of his kin.

Only one of the men that Buck sent out to scout, Rafe Carson, came back. Zeke had caught Ike Mooney sneaking through the brush. Zeke had got behind Mooney and cut his throat. Zeke then made his way to where Three-Gun and Cash were positioned, in a thicket to the right front of the barn. When Carson returned and Mooney didn't, Jeb and Buck knew he was dead. Carson told Buck and Jeb that he counted nine men, including the two in the house. And he gave them locations as best as he could tell.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL  
 I gotta get that ol' boy to come  
 on outta that barn. How many ya  
 think is in there?

ZEKE TAYLOR  
 'Bout 15, I'm bettin'.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL  
 Listen, Zeke you come with me.  
 Cash, get to the house and let  
 Cleve know what I'm gonna do and  
 then let Rufus and the rest of  
 the boys know.

Three-Gun and Zeke made their way to a small shed Cleve had in the rear of his house. There, they gathered four kerosene filled lamps and worked their way around to the rear of the barn. At the same time, Cash had made his way to the house to let Cleve and Louis know Three-Gun's plan. He then gathered Arizona, Rufus and Lucky and they positioned themselves so that they all had clear sight to the barn door. After lighting rags they had stuffed into the lamps, Three-Gun and Zeke hurled the bombs at the barn. The explosions of the lamps and the fire they caused caught the Pike/Morgan boys so off guard that there was momentary chaos in the barn.

HENCHMAN  
 (panicked)  
 Goddam, them boys got they self a  
 cannon. What we gon' do, Buck?

BUCK MORGAN

Settle down ya dumb sumbitch.  
Them darkies ain't got no damn  
cannon. Don't ya smell the  
kerosene? Them niggers is tryin'  
ta burn us out. We got to get  
outside and find cover. We goin'  
out firin', so watch yaself. Jeb,  
ya ready, cousin?

JEB PIKE

(dazed and confused)  
I'm wit ya.

After setting the barn on fire, Zeke and Three-Gun maneuvered their way to the house. After briefly talking to Cleve and Louis, they went back outside to set up. Using the house as a centerpoint, the men set up in a crescent shaped defense in front of the barn. Everyone with Cleve knew that that Jeb and Buck were not to be killed. Three-Gun and Cleve would take care of them personally. Now they waited for the Pike/Morgan gang to make their move. They didn't have to wait long. In a rush, Jeb and his bunch rushed out with, both the barn and their guns blazing. They made their way for cover behind anything solid. During the furious exchange of fire, both Arizona and Cleve were slightly wounded, Cleve in the shoulder and Arizona with a glancing flesh wound to the cheek. No more of Jeb's boys had been hit. But that all changed very swiftly. Within a span of 90 seconds, three of Jeb's boys were felled by fatal shots to the chest or neck. But now, with the intensity of gunfire, both side began to take losses. Cash was shot and killed while trying to make his way to the house. Then Zeke, in his zeal to avenge Cash, made himself too visible and was downed by rifle shot to the abdomen. Slowly, men on both sides were being killed or badly injured. The count was now, 13 Pike/Morgan men versus 6 men in Cleve's camp. Cleve knew if they were gonna turn the tide, it had to be now. They had finally all made it to the house, so it was now or never.

CLEVE

(to Three-Gun)  
Cousin, we need to take care of  
this thing now, before everybody  
gets killed.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

How ya want ta do this?

On one side, Buck, Jeb and their men, all had at least taken a minor gunshot wound. On the Masters' side of those left, half were wounded: Cleve, Arizona and Louis, while the others, Lucky, Rufus and Three-Gun, were unscathed.

The most serious wounds were to Louis' leg, with was badly damaged and in need of immediate medical attention, and two of Buck's boys had very serious chest wounds. and probably would soon expire.

CLEVE

Look we know where they are out there, I need you boys ta go out here with me and my cousin. We gonna take down everybody except Jeb and Buck. Then, Rufus and Lucky can take Louis and Arizona to Doc Benton. Arizona, you remember where he lives?

ARIZONA GREEN

Yeah, I think so, out near Lancer's Pass, right?

CLEVE

You remember right.

RUFUS BUCK

Well, I think we need to do this thing. My boy's hurt pretty bad  
(motioning to Louis)  
and I don't aim to lose him.

Lucky stayed inside with Louis, who was bleeding profusely to lay down cover fire. The others went out the back to try and come up behind their opponent achieving the element of surprise. The tactic worked much better than expected, but at a price. After shooting and killing two of the opposing men who were together, Arizona was killed by another Pike/Morgan man who was nearby. As Arizona was making his way through the brush, the Pike/Morgan man stepped right in front of him and shot Arizona four times in the stomach with a Western Fast Draw. But when the smoke finally cleared, only Jeb and Buck remained from their gang. And now Rufus had taken a bullet to his arm, but not his shooting arm. Cleve, Rufus and Three-Gun, now had Buck and Jeb at the end of their guns, but didn't fire.

CLEVE

Throw ya flamers on the ground  
and unbuckle ya gun belts and let  
'em hit dirt.

Buck started to speak and Rufus shot at his feet.

RUFUS BUCK

I'm bleedin' over here, boy. Shut  
up and do what this man say. I  
ain't got all day, I got ta see  
me a doctor.

Buck and Jeb followed orders and were ushered over near the ruins of the barn, again. Cleve threw down his Winchester and his gunbelt.

CLEVE

Boys I lied when I said I was  
gonna kill ya both. My cousin  
here has somethin' he wants to  
discuss with Buck.

Buck had never seen Three-Gun before, but had heard his name. And he had no idea he was Cleve's cousin or what his trouble with him was.

BUCK MORGAN

Look Mitchell, I don't even know  
you. My fight is with Masters.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

Look a-here peckerwood, when you  
killed Ella Masters  
(Cleve's mother)  
you killed my ma too. And like my  
cousin told ya, ya got ta pay.

Three-Gun untied his holsters from his legs, unbuckled the belt and dropped it. It seemed that he was going to take Buck down physically, until Buck rushed him, with a knife he had hidden in his jacket. But, Buck must have forgotten his adversary's moniker, Three-Gun. When Buck got almost within arms length, Three-Gun pulled the pearl-handled Smith and Wesson, .38 revolver from the small of his back and unloaded all six rounds into Buck's face. The tight wound pattern around Buck's nose and mouth showed the work of an expert marksman. Buck never made a sound as he crumpled to the ground. As he reloaded his weapon, Three-Gun he kicked Buck's lifeless body, looking toward Cleve.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

Ya want me ta burn this one too?  
(pointing at Jeb)

Jeb was watching Three-Gun and never saw Cleve approach him. The right hand that Cleve connected with Jeb's mouth, which became a mass of blood, teeth and saliva. Before he could fall to the ground, Cleve hit him twice more in the face.

As soon as Jeb's chest hit the ground, his cheekbone felt the full wrath of Cleve's boot. Three-Gun was following right along, pistol cocked and loaded. Cleve pulled Jeb from the ground by his collar.

CLEVE

I ain't never bothered you boys,  
but ya been on my ass since we  
was young.

Cleve hit him with a vicious head and body combination, kicking Jeb again as he went down. From his place on the ground, Jeb saw a Colt .45 revolver that had been lost in the gunfight. He reached out and pulled it toward him, mistakenly thinking that he wasn't seen and slowly rolled over onto his back, now facing Cleve. Jeb had been savagely beaten and was in dire need medical attention, so his reactions were slow. But Cleve and Three-Gun had been watching and as Jeb crawled over and retrieved the pistol. Three-Gun tossed his revolver to Cleve, who caught it and fanned the hammer of the revolver until it was empty, putting Jeb out of his misery. Now, he was almost finished. Cleve now had to settle things with Herbert Guidry. Guidry couldn't hide behind Buck Morgan or Jeb Pike anymore. Cleve had seen to that. Cleve felt that he could trust Sheriff Caleb Settles to arrest and hold Guidry, once Cleve made him confess. At the same time that Cleve and Three-Gun were dealing with Jeb and Buck, Rufus and Lucky had been getting Louis and themselves ready to head to Doc Benton's. Louis was now going in and out of consciousness, and Rufus knew he didn't have much time. Cleve gave them use of his buckboard to more securely move Louis and told Rufus how to find Doc Benton's place and thanked Rufus, Lucky and Louis.

CLEVE

There ain't no way I could ever  
thank you boys for what ya did  
for me. Rufus, you and Lucky take  
care of Louis and ya selves.  
Louis, just hang on friend.  
Doc'll fix ya up. Rufus, give Doc  
this money and tell him I'll come  
by soon.

The men embraced and patted each other heartily on the back. Louis had regained consciousness, and Cleve went to his buckboard, which Lucky was driving to get Louis to the doctor. He clasped Louis' hand.

CLEVE

I'm sorry, my friend. Your wound will always hold heavy on my heart. If you ever need anything, everything I have is yours. Rufus, you know the same goes for you and Lucky. Louis squeezed Cleve's hand.

LOUIS

(weakly)

Don't worry. You are a good man Cleve Masters. You never asked for help. We are your friends. We will always be here if you need us.

RUFUS BUCK

Cleve, you ain't got ta thank us. You a friend of us and ya needed help. Ya helped us when we needed ya. And if ya ever need my help, look me up. Three-Gun, you and yo cousin keep these white folk in line.

(they embrace)

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

Which way you boys headed.

RUFUS BUCK

'Round Abilene way. You ridin'?

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

Naw, but I'll catch up ta ya in a few days. We got one more bit of business ta handle in town. But, I'll see ya by weeks end.

LUCKY

Hell, we probably be back this away fore ya know it.

Rufus mounted his horse and Lucky manned the buckboard and they rode off. It was now time for Cleve and Three-Gun to deal with Guidry and put an end to this whole saga. They figured Guidry would have only three or four men with him. They could take them, even with Cleve's injury. After they'd cleaned and dressed their wounds and Cleve and Three-Gun both re-supplied their ammunition, and rode out on their readied their horses.

CLEVE

So, how ya figure we ought ta handle this thing.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

(fingering his revolver)

I say we just go in there and whip his ass and take him ta the sheriff. Anyone tries ta stop us, goes the way of the rest of that bunch. Let's ride, cousin.

Tired from the gunfight, Cleve and Three-Gun rode leisurely into town. The six-mile ride gave them time to talk.

EXT.-ROAD TO HELL' PATH

CLEVE

Ya say you gonna ride with Rufus and his boys, hey? Wouldn't be bad ta have ya round here for a while. I sure do need my brother 'bout now?

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

I been givin' that some thought. I need ta ride with Rufus ta make a little more money, then I plan ta come back home. And don't be goin' and gettin' all sentimental on me.

They share a hearty laugh and knowing looks. Cleve thought from the way that he spoke, that his cousin just might come back home. As they rode into town, they immediately saw one of Guidry's men, one of those who was too young to ride. But, when he saw Cleve and Three-Gun ride into town, he made a beeline for Guidry's bank. By the time they rode up to the bank, Guidry and five men came out of the bank. Guidry had been aware of the plan and knew if Cleve was alive, here in town, then all his men must have perished. He hoped that one of the men he had left, might get in a shot and kill both Cleve and his cousin, but Guidry knew that **he** would probably die. But he had to try and "talk some sense" into Cleve. Cleve and Three-Gun dismounted their horses and stepped away from the front of the bank building. Three-Gun was already holding his rifle and surveilling the area, with Cleve fingering his holstered revolver. The men Guidry had left were either inexperienced or over the hill. They all looked jumpy and Cleve knew gunplay was at hand. Guidry made the first move.

EXT.-HELL'S PATH BANK

GUIDRY

I told you that I just couldn't control them boys sometimes. I wanted to talk to you, try and make you see reason. Let's go inside and talk this out, Cleve. What happened to the rest of the men, did they run?

Guidry knew that Jeb and Buck must be dead, but he wondered where his other men were.

CLEVE

They ain't run off. They laying out at my place with Buck and Jeb.

GUIDRY

(shocked)  
All of them?

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

Ever' last one.  
(cocking his rifle)

When what was left of Guidry men heard this, things started to heat up.

OLD HENCHMAN

You niggers cain't be just killin' white men like that. If the sheriff won't take care of it we will, right boys?!

Only two men responded. That meant that the odds were now only three to two. The two men who had failed to echo the sentiments of the first man eased away from the pack and meshed into the now assembled crowd. If Guidry wanted to avoid a gunfight, that was his decision, Cleve felt.

CLEVE

Nobody gonna see the sheriff except Guidry. Now we plans ta take him over ta Caleb's office and have him held 'til the federal judge comes back around.

GUIDRY

Hold on now, boy. I've committed no crime.  
(indignantly)



CLEVE

You had our folks killed, our  
ranches burned and you had them  
old boys come see us today too.  
So, let's just go over ta see  
Caleb and sort this out. We don't  
need any more shootin'.

(pulling his guns from  
their holsters)

But, we're going ta see the  
sheriff, now.

GUIDRY

Now see here, I helped you people  
build this town up. I sold you  
food and supplies, mortgaged your  
homes.

CLEVE

And we paid for ever thing we  
ever got from you. And my Pa and  
uncles owned their own property,  
no mortgages. Now move!!!

Three-Gun pointed his rifle at Guidry and motioned for him  
to go with them.

GUIDRY

Aren't any of you men going to do  
anything?  
(yelling)

The instigating cowboy made a move for his gun and Cleve hit  
him twice in the leg, trying to avoid killing him. But when  
he tried to go for the gun that was still in it's holster,  
despite his wounds, Cleve sent a final shot to his chest,  
killing him.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

(to the other two)

Don't end up like ya friend,  
there. Just keep ya hands in  
sight and we'll be fine.

But of course, one man had to try his luck. He at least got  
his gun from his holster, before Three-Gun left him dying in  
the street with three shots from his Remington rifle. With  
this, the last gunman raised his hands and walked away.  
Guidry was now alone, silent and broken. Sheriff Caleb  
Settles had witnessed the entire episode from across the  
street, standing in front of the sheriff's office/jail. He  
knew that Cleve would handle it right and turn Guidry over  
to him.

He met Cleve, Three-Gun and Herbert Guidry in the middle of the street, followed by the observing crowd. He took physical control of Guidry and tried to disperse the crowd.

CALEB SETTLES

Okay, folks, that's all the excitement for today. Go about your business. Won't be no more action. Guidry, you just come with me. I done telegraphed Ft. Smith and asked for them to hurry a judge up, and get you out of here.

GUIDRY

I hope you know that I am a personal friend of Judge Parker. These ridiculous charges will never hold. You people are making a terrible mistake. You all will pay for this.

CLEVE

You made the only mistake, by killing my family. And you'll hang for it. Judge Parker is a honorable man and once he hears the whole story, we'll see who pays.

The trial of Herbert Guidry would have been short and sweet had it not taken two weeks for the judge to arrive. But once he was there, citizens of Hell's Path and even some white citizens of Herberton testified to the reign of terror that had been wrought for years by Guidry and his henchmen. Judge Mc Cawley testified to how, ten years ago, Guidry had forced him to sentence Cleve. Judge Parker wasted no time in chastising and then sentencing Guidry.

INT.-HERBERTON JAIL/COURTHOUSE

JUDGE PARKER

I have never been so ashamed to be personally involved with any individual in my life. Not only have you run roughshod over an entire territory with your financial practices, but your record of causing death and devastation is deplorable. The testimony I have heard from these people here is cause enough for me to give you life at hard labor, but the massacre of the Masters families, instigated at your behest, will cause you to be sentenced to be hanged by the neck until dead, the sentence to be carried out in three days.

An audible sigh of relief rippled through the courtroom, and Judge Parker didn't try to stifle it. He knew that these townspeople and especially Cleve Masters, who with Three-Gun, had stood silently in the rear of the courtroom for the entire four day trial, needed and deserved this resolution. The judge and Cleve made eye contact and Cleve nodded his thanks to Judge Parker who acknowledged with a nod of his own. During the entire four days, Herbert Guidry never said a word. He just sat at the table with his attorney, emotionally destroyed. He never thought that everyone would turn on him this way. But with the Buck Morgan, Jeb Pike, and company dead, they felt no fear of reprisal for speaking out.

Cleve and Three-Gun left the court house, quietly. They mounted their horses without speaking and headed toward Cleve's ranch.

EXT.-ROAD LEADING FROM HELL'S PATH TO CIRCLE "M" RANCH

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

Ya want ta see the hanging?

CLEVE

No need. I'll know when it happens.

THREE-GUN MITCHELL

I guess I'll be catching up to Rufus and the boys. This is gonna be my last go-round. I'mma make a little more cash and come on back home.

Cleve looked at his cousin and smiled. He'd hoped Three-Gun would stay, but at least he knew he'd be back.

CLEVE

Glad ta here it, cousin. Ya take care of ya self and get back here in one piece. I'll be waitin'.

Three-Gun rode off north, never looking back. Cleve watched Three-Gun until he was out of sight, then rode home. Cleve didn't go back into Hell's Path for almost six weeks. Caleb Settles had come to ranch in the evening on the day Guidry was hung.

INT.-CLEVE MASTERS' HOME

CALEB SETTLES

Just wanted to let you know that it was done. Judge Parker wanted me to tell you that he appreciated how you never tried to cause a fuss at the trial, but he would have understood if you did. He says if you ever need his help, just come to the fort. You ain't been in town for a while, how you set for supplies?

CLEVE

I'm good. 'Preciate ya coming out and all. Weren't no reason for me ta see him hung, 'sides, I knew it when it happened. A thing like that is so deep in ya, ya can just feel it.

CALEB SETTLES

(thoughtfully)

Reckon so. Well, next time you are around town, stop in and have a drink of whisky with an old friend, huh?

CLEVE

You bet. Probably be around in a couple more weeks. And Caleb, thanks.

CALEB SETTLES

I owed it to you. Take care of yourself.

As Cleve sat on his porch that night, cleaning his rifle, he knew things were going to be all right. He had the ranches up and running again and business never really missed a beat. His days consisted of riding his land, talking to his cattle bosses and making sure his property and animals were the best in the territory. Things were nice and peaceful now, but who knew how long that would last. Cleve only knew, that he would always be ready, always.

THE END